

Message Text

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ACTION EA-12

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INFO AMEMBASSY TOKYO
AMEMBASSY BELGRADE
AMEMBASSY BUDAPEST
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
AMEMBASSY WARSAW
AMEMBASSY PRAGUE
AMEMBASSY BERLIN
AMCONSUL HONG KONG
USLO PEKING
AMEMBASSY BUCHAREST
AMEMBASSY SOFIA
USMISSION USUN
CINCPAC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SEOUL 2082

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: USUN, CINCPAC
SUBJECT: KOREAN "PING-PONG" DIPLOMACY

1. ATHLETIC ACITIVITES HAVE PLAYED A SIGNIFICANT ROLE IN
RECENT EFFORTS BY THE ROK TO ENHANCE ITS INTERNATIONAL
STANDING. OF THE FEW BUT INCREASING CONTACTS WITH THE COMMUNIST
WORLD, SPORTS EVENTS HAVE BEEN A SIGNIFICANT PART, INCLUDING
UNIVERSIAD GAMES IN BULGARIA IN 1977, AND IN MOSCOW SOME
YEARS EARLIER. FOR 1978, THE ROK AMATEUR ATHLETIC ASSOCIA-
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TION HAS PLANS TO SEND TEAMS ABROAD TO AT LEAST 140 EVENTS,
IN 28 COUNTRIES. JAPAN WILL BE THE SCENE FOR MOST (66)
OF THESE ACTIVITIES, BUT THE ROK WILL SEND A BOXING TEAM
TO YUGOSLAVIA IN MAY, A WEIGHTLIFTING TEAM TO HUNGARY IN
JULY, A WOMEN'S VOLLEYBALL TEAM TO MOSCOW IN AUGUST, AND
A TABLE TENNIS TEAM TO YUGOSLAVIA IN DECEMBER.

2. THE FOLLIWING YEAR PRESENTS A STILL MORE INTERESTING DEVELOPMENT, SINCE IN APRIL 1979 NORTH KOREA HAS UNDERTAKEN TO HOST AN INTERNATIONAL TABLE TENNIS TOURNAMENT. UNDER THE RULES OF THE INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION PYONGYANG HAS AGREED TO INVITE ALL MEMBER NATIONS, WHICH INCLUDE THE ROK. FOREIGN MINISTRY SOURCES, WHILE SKEPTICAL ABOUT THE NORTH'S ACTUAL COMPLIANCE WITH THIS REQUIREMENT, ADVISE THAT THE ROK PLANS TO SEND A TEAM IF INVITED. THIS WOULD CONSTITUTE A SIGNIFICANT PRECEDENT IN SUPPORT OF ROK EFFORTS TO DEVELOP UNOFFICIAL EXCHANGES WITH THE NORTH.

3. THE ROK ALSO PLANS TO HOST AT LEAST 44 INTERNATIONAL SPORTING EVENTS IN 1978. MANY OF THESE WILL BE SMALL-SCALE, BILATERAL OR INVITATIONAL MEETINGS. HOWEVER, SOME WILL BE SUBSTANTIAL IN SIZE. A TAEKWON-DO TOURNAMENT SCHEDULED FOR JUNE 30 - JULY 2 IS EXPECTING PARTICIPANTS FROM 25 COUNTRIES, INCLUDING POLAND AND YUGOSLAVIA. KOREA HAS ALSO BEEN SELECTED AS THE HOST FOR AN INTERNATIONAL MARKSMANSHIP CHAMPIONSHIP CONTEST IN SEPTEMBER WHICH IS EXPECTED TO INCLUDE TEAMS FROM A NUMBER OF COMMUNIST COUNTRIES (ALTHOUGH ACTUAL PARTICIPATION HAS NOT YET BEEN CONFIRMED).

4. ROK OFFICIALS ACKNOWLEDGE THAT THEIR INCLUSION IN ATHLETICS EVENTS IN COMMUNIST COUNTRIES, OR THE PRESENCE

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OF COMMUNIST CONTESTANTS IN THE ROK, DOES NOT NECESSARILY CONVEY A CHANGE IN THE OFFICIAL ATTITUDES OF THOSE GOVERNMENTS TOWARD THE ROK, BUT THEY NONETHELESS FIND ENCOURAGING ALL STEPS BY THE COMMUNIST GOVERNMENTS TOWARD COMPLIANCE WITH STANDARDS OF INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS. INCREASED ROK PRESTIGE AND INTERNATIONAL ACCEPTANCE ARE A USUAL FALL-OUT OF SUCH DEVELOPMENTS. MOREOVER, THE NEGATIVE REACTIONS SUCH STEPS HAVE ELICITED IN THE PAST FROM PYONGYANG AND AT TIMES FROM MOSCOW MEAN THAT ROK ACCEPTANCE IS BY NO MEANS VOID OF ACTUAL POLITICAL CONTENT.

5. IN DESCRIBING THE ASSOCIATION'S PLANS, DIRECTOR KIM SONG-KYU OF THE FOREIGN AFFAIRS DIVISION OF THE KOREAN AMATEUR ATHLETIC ASSOCIATION ASKED FOR ASSURANCE THAT THE U.S. WOULD PROVIDE ASSISTANCE IN THE EVENT OF AN EMERGENCY IN COUNTRIES WHERE THE ROK HAS NO FORMAL REPRESENTATION.

6. ACTION REQUESTED: THE EMBASSY WOULD LIKE TO BE ABLE TO CONFIRM THAT U.S. FOREIGN SERVICE POSTS WILL BE AUTHORIZED TO OFFER UNOFFICIAL ADVICE AND COMMUNICATIONS

ASSISTANCE TO ROK ATHLETIC GROUPS SHOULD EMERGENCIES
ARISE DURING THE PROJECTED VISITS TO THE USSR, HUNGARY,
YUGOSLAVIA.
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